

## COMMITTEE ON JOINT SCHOOL BUILDINGS

December 15, 2020

4:00 p.m.

Chairman Beaudry called the meeting to order.

Chairman Beaudry stated due to the COVID-19/Coronavirus crisis and in accordance with Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this Committee is authorized to meet electronically.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Long, Terrio, Shaw (arrived late)  
School Committee Members Beaudry, Porter (arrived late), Soule

Messrs. J. Gagne

### Southside 5th Grade Inclusion

- Play space design and bid documents are being prepared by the Department of Public Works and the Parks Department. Once complete, an RFP will be issued.
- Projected budget is \$150,000

*(Note: This is for informational purposes only; no action is required.)*

Josh Gagne, Chief of Facilities, stated with regard to Southside there is not a whole lot to report. Bid documents are still being produced so we can put those out to bid. There is not much to report there. We would like to have that done in the next several weeks so that we have those back by mid to late January.

5. MST Hangar

- Construction is substantially complete
- Estimated completion date: December 21

Contract: \$244,000

Phase 1: Slab Install \$ 78,000 is complete

Phase 2: Metal Structure \$166,000

*(Note: This is for informational purposes only; no action is required.)*

Chairman Beaudry stated it says here project budget is \$150,000 and you are within budget I am assuming.

Mr. Gagne stated replied yes. We projected the play area to be about \$103,000 and that was with a \$10,000 contingency so we are well within budget.

Chairman Beaudry stated I just got a text message from Pete Perich saying that he can't get into the meeting. I don't know if anybody has his email address to tell him that you have to scroll down a little bit further and it is a different format than the School Board.

Lisa McCarthy, Assistant City Clerk, stated he is not part of this meeting; he is part of the next meeting.

Chairman Beaudry stated after this one I will try to get a hold of him.

Mr. Gagne stated with MST we are nearing the end. We should be substantially complete by the end of the week. Today finishes are going in; those sort of touch ups. The fire panel is being installed tomorrow and then the sprinkler will be flooded, and we hope to be punching out the building, the final punch list, by early next week and then all we will need is an occupancy permit.

Chairman Beaudry asked is that going to be a dry system that is in there.

Mr. Gagne replied I think it is wet. I am not sure. I would have to look that up for you.

Chairman Beaudry stated we talked earlier last week, Mr. Gagne, about the floor covering. You have to bring that up. Is that still a decision? What did you decide on that?

Mr. Gagne replied the quote came back double what we thought it was worth, so at this time we decided not to do anything. With that said, we had some contingencies built in for different items in the project, so right now it looks like we will be returning \$22,600 of contingency money that we didn't use.

Chairman Beaudry replied okay. Any other questions for Mr. Gagne, either on the Southside project or the MST hangar?

Alderman Long stated first, \$26,000, great job. What was the original estimated contract?

Mr. Gagne replied \$244,000.

Alderman Long asked is it from the metal structure, the \$166,000, that we are under budget by the \$26,000.

Mr. Gagne replied we put in some money for site work, some contingencies, we didn't know what we would hit and we didn't hit anything, and we had some building contingencies that we didn't use. Combined they total \$22,600.

Alderman Long stated very good. Thank you, Mr. Gagne.

Alderman Terrio asked are we going to be discussing the facilities study.

Chairman Beaudry replied I would like to see that. Once we get through it with finance, at our next joint meeting I would like to have a copy of it sent to you. As a matter of fact, we could send a copy of it to you now so that we would have something for tomorrow.

Alderman Terrio stated I would just like to ask a question of anybody who is knowledgeable about it because I have a concern.

Chairman Beaudry replied go ahead. Between myself and Ms. DeFrancis we might be able to answer the question.

Alderman Terrio stated I remember a facilities study not that long ago, within the last two years, and at that time what we were finding is that the grade schools K-5 were pretty full, in the middle schools there was some room and so the plan was to move fifth grade up to the middle schools to make some more room because our grade schools were at capacity and then we found there was a lot of capacity at the high school level, and this was pre-Covid. I don't know if it was an official facilities study but when we looked at it, what we came up with the middle school level to alleviate overcrowding. My understanding is that the new facilities study has found something different and here is my concern. It is that I believe it was done during Covid and we have almost 800 students who have left the district. We don't know how long that is because this is kind of a short snapshot in time. So my concern is that in my opinion the pre-Covid facilities study was probably more accurate and that with this study I am kind of concerned because there is some talk about possibly closing a grade school, but pre-Covid the other facilities

study showed that we don't have any ability to close a grade school. Could you discuss that and respond to some of my concerns about the pre-Covid and the present study?

Chairman Beaudry stated you are right, Alderman Terrio. Mr. Matuszewski did a study for the redistricting plan, I think it was about four years ago, and you are right. It said that the elementary schools were overcrowded and that is why we were moving the fifth graders into the middle schools to open up some of the space in the elementary schools to lower class sizes, especially at Northwest where that was one of the major schools that was overcrowded. This study is saying that they want to close four elementary schools initially and then build a brand new building on the Smyth Road site and close down McDonough and Webster, so they actually want to close six elementary schools, which is a 10-year plan. Over the course of that time that is what their prediction is. Those are going to be the questions I am going to ask the facilities people tomorrow when we meet because it doesn't make sense when we have high schools that are 50 percent occupied and they want to put \$32 million into our high schools to refurbish them and not even repurpose them and they want to close down the elementary schools, which the other study was saying were overcrowded.

Alderman Terrio asked is it correct to say that this study was done wholly within the period of Covid.

Chairman Beaudry replied yes. As a matter of fact, they started right after Covid. It was right after June. They have been doing it for about three months.

Alderman Terrio stated obviously we have a lot we need to flush out and do more work, but my concern is we are looking at a snapshot in time that is not really the correct conditions. It is a temporary condition so I would hate to make a decision

on something that is not going to maybe pan out in the future. I think that would be a big mistake on our part to look at what is happening in the last few months and say we need to make long lasting, long-term effects based on a short period of time.

Chairman Beaudry stated in their defense, what they gave us was a 10-year look-back. The data in there was looking back 10 years, so they should know what the demographics were of this city for 10 years. I have data that was sent to me that I requested today that if you went back 15 years ago, we had almost 7,000 students in our high schools and we have 3,400 in there right now. Ten years was probably not enough look-back, they should have looked back a little further. They had all the information from Mr. Gagne, they had the information from Fred Matuszewski and his study, and they had the Parsons Brinkerhoff study, so they had all of the information. I don't know how they come up with these findings, but we will find out tomorrow night. You are welcome to listen in and then if you have any questions, you can get those questions to Ms. DeFrancis and we can get them to the people that did the study.

Assistant City Clerk McCarthy stated Chairman Beaudry Alderman Shaw is online now and she has a question.

Alderman Shaw stated this is a statement that I would like to have you carry with you to that meeting, at least in your mind. As far as I am concerned, there is no such thing as an overcrowded elementary school. That isn't what I meant. As far as I am concerned, there are no schools that should be closed. Ideally, every classroom should be no more than 20 kids and if they have space to make extra classrooms, then they should hire a teacher and make an extra classroom so that there are 20 kids in a class. The state says 25, I am pushing for 20.

Chairman Beaudry stated Alderman, the School Board has set their own standards and we did put for I believe K-1 or K-2, it is K-2, that we wanted 20 kids, so we do have lower standards than the state standards. During this study they used the state standards.

Alderman Shaw stated it should be from grades 3 through 5 or at least 4 in the elementary schools. Twenty kids to a class because if we are going to compete with charter schools, the reason kids can't do well in public schools is because of the small sizes of the classrooms and things of that respect. But I think if they are going to do anything to the schools in this city, they should wait and see what happens when the kids go back full time. You have kids that are missing right now that teachers don't even know where they are, you have kids that are being homeschooled and there is no way they are going to be homeschooled the rest of their life. Most parents can't wait for school to reopen. I think that this study that was just done is something that I would have to walk up to them and say prove it to me because I do not believe it. I don't know where those figures came from or how this ever can about, but to me that is wrong and I am very disturbed about it.

Chairman Beaudry stated I respect what you have to say, Alderman. I feel the same way reading that report and that is why tomorrow night will be an important meeting. I have similar questions on exactly what you just brought up because we have a study four years ago that completely contradicts what their study has said. I don't want to say anything discouraging right now until they come forward and defend themselves on how they got to these numbers. Mr. Gagne is on this line and he can say that some of our buildings really need to be taken out or replaced, but some of these buildings with the repairs that are needed it doesn't behoove us to put good money into bad. Mr. Gagne, could you just enlighten us a little bit on that? I know you talked about the envelope at Gossler and how bad that school is,

and I am assuming there are other schools that are similar to that because there are three or four schools that were all built at the same time.

Mr. Gagne stated in the report they do touch on the fact that a lot of our buildings are older and in some cases over 70 years. I kind of see the school district at a crossroads. You have to sort of ramp up for the next 40, 50, 60 years with changes in technology and changes in programs, and a possible shrinking population pool. You are kind of at a crossroads. I think you have to weed out some older buildings that are no longer useful and then determine which buildings will be the buildings that you want to invest in.

Chairman Beaudry stated exactly. Are there questions on any of this? Alderman Terrio, I will have our clerk send a copy out to the Aldermen of that report so that you guys can take a look at it.

*There being no further business, **School Committee Member Soule** moved to adjourn. **Alderman Long** duly seconded the motion. Chairman Beaudry called for a vote. The motion carried on a unanimous roll call vote.*

A True Record. Attest.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Normand". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Clerk of Committee